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Help save the turtles

7/23/2005 5:00 AM
By: Staff and wire reports



Kemp's ridley sea turtles, less than 48 hours old, follow their instinct into the Gulf of Mexico.

"Kemp's ridley is the most endangered sea turtle species in the world. It's thought that there are fewer than 3,000 adults remaining in the world today," biologist Donna Shaver said.

Shaver has been studying the Kemp's ridley for 25 years. And her work has paid off.

"This is the first time for a sea turtle of any species that's been



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experimentally imprinted to a particular area, to return to that area to nest," Shaver said.

For centuries tens of thousands of Kemp's ridley turtles nested in Rancho Nuevo, Mexico, 200 miles away. From 1978 until 1988, researchers collected eggs and transported them to Padre Island.

"The eggs were incubated in Padre Island sand, the hatchlings were released on the beach at Padre Island National Seashore, allowed to crawl into the surf and recaptured using aquarium dip nets," Shaver said.

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Sea turtles
 Kemp's ridley sea turtles are being preserved along the Padre Island National Seashore.

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ADD TO CART

It's called imprinting; an attempt to change the turtles natural impulse to return to the same breeding grounds. After 9 months the yearling turtles were released. And so far this year, 46 Kemp's ridley nests have been located on the Texas coast.

"The establishment of a second nesting area, where the Kemp's Ridley's could go to nest safely, would help to ensure the survivorship of the species in case some kind of environmental or political disaster occurred," Shaver said.

The Kemp's ridley is doing better after human craving for skins and eggs nearly destroyed the species. And while the turtles face untold threats in the water, it is man who holds their future.

If you are interested in being a Padre Island volunteer in the Kemp's ridley project, call (512) 949-8173.



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